

The Contingency of Meaning to the Party of God: Carnavalesque Humor in Revolutionary Times

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The events in the Arab Spring have previously been examined by journalistic and academic sources. Arguments surrounding the series of social movements that swept through the Middle East have shifted focus over time to assessing the success of revolutions in unseating political regimes, resulting in an inordinate amount of attention paid to “successful revolutions,” and the devalorization of “unsuccessful” ones. In the case of Syria, the 2011 Revolution has been linguistically relegated from *revolution* to *crisis* and finally to *civil war*. This article draws from the conviction that long-term change is required to unsettle long-standing and stable dictatorships such as the one in Syria. Thus, this visual analysis of the Hezbollah logo parodies that emerged following the party’s military support of the Syrian regime recognizes the carnivalesque ability of revolution to suspend existing *régimes de savoir* and break the fear to widen the discursive space toward uncrowning hitherto uncontested political authority. Thus, this study suggests a novel perspective for when revolutions conclude, and when assessments of their results may be made.

Keywords: political parody, social movement, humor, dissent, Arab Spring

Hezbollah, a militant political party that emerged in the mid-1980s as a response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (Lamloum, 2009) has drawn international attention from media outlets, governments, and academics. Notwithstanding the geopolitical importance of the party to the environment of the region, the party has become a powerful semiotic symbol in the register of circulated visual and textual communication in the region, and particularly in Syria (Azani, 2009). Notably, the refusal of the party to relinquish its arms allowed it to present itself to the Arab public as an armed anticolonialist resistance project and a military deterrent to Israeli aggression under the banner of the “Party of God.” Admittedly, the decision to remain armed motivated the international condemnation of the party as a terrorist organization, thereby establishing from inception the contradictory meaning of the party across contexts.

However, the reception of the party within the Arab-speaking Middle East throughout the 1980s and 1990s demonstrates that only the earlier narrative of the party gained resonance with the public. This is in part because of the party’s unique attention to political communication and political branding in the

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region. From inception, Hezbollah's strategy entailed an unprecedented openness to all media aimed at controlling the narrative surrounding the party. Even before the declaration of the party's creation, one of its leaders, Ibrahim Said al-Amin, held an interview with a Lebanese magazine to anticipate and counter accusations of terrorism the party may face (Lamloum, 2009). In its nascent stage, the party afforded intense efforts into the maintenance of its political image, creating a centralized system of media institutions that controlled its public image, a goal outlined in the first Media Congress of the party in 1985 (Maasri, 2009). Consequently, Hezbollah's institutional framework guarantees a degree of control over its political image. In parallel, Hezbollah's activities also sustained the former narrative successfully for several decades, most notably during the 2006 war with Israel, which resolidified Israel as the primary enemy of the party and valorized Hezbollah's efforts through its relative successes during the war.

Yet, the narratives that govern the public perception of Hezbollah have been fractured since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict. Since the Syrian Revolution, the controversial involvement of Hezbollah to defend its Syrian ally, most prominently in the battle of al-Qusayr, has put the party under scrutiny, as it pitted the party against the popular movement and thus repositioned the party as a force of oppression of people's will rather than of resistance. On another front, the revolution undermined Hezbollah's agenda of Islamic resistance because of its inconsistency with the party's military suppression of the civil rebellion of a Muslim-majority population. Accordingly, the Syrian revolution provided the backdrop to a series of parodic reinterpretations of the Hezbollah logo created by opposition figures and circulated on Facebook, *tansiqiyyat* websites,¹ and in traditional news outlets, contrasting the political brand of Hezbollah, the "Party of God," with the changed reality of the party's involvement in Syria.

Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) theorization of humor as a form of political resistance, I argue that these parodies erode the credibility of Hezbollah's agenda through visual departures from original representations of the party image. They erode the party's political authority, question its autonomy, and dismantle the menacing image of the party through ridicule. In turn, because of the alignment of Hezbollah with the Syrian regime, the proliferation of such parodies indicate the erosion of the regime's control over the narratives of the revolution and its main actors. The parodies of Hezbollah's logo exemplify the gradual and less visible politics of delegitimation and the undermining of authority that emerges in resistance movements. In turn, the humor they contribute offers opportunities for the empowerment of the public vis-à-vis the object of ridicule. As Bakhtin demonstrates, laughter, particularly when it is prompted by grotesque parodies, liberates the public by allowing them to laugh at what "at another time they would shed tears" (D'Israeli, 1834 as cited by Young, E. 2008, p. 116). In turn, this laughter brings powerful figures "down to earth" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 20). As a result, I argue that these parodies point to the significance of the Syrian Revolution in introducing an enduring counternarrative of both Hezbollah in Syria and the region and of the Syrian regime, suggesting the continuing character of revolutions and presenting alternative measures of their success. As such, this article presents examples of the Hezbollah parodies to draw scholarly attention to everyday forms of resistance and away from the current focus on "revolutions," particularly ones deemed successful because of their ability to unseat political power.

¹ *Tansiqiyyat* are the Protest Organization Committees in each province and city that organize demonstrations and offer citizen-journalist coverage of casualties.

Before embarking on a visual analysis of the parodic reproductions, the following section affords a space to understand the appearance of the original logo and its importance in framing the narrative of fear and political authority of the party. Here, a brief introduction into the organization's logo elucidates the visual and textual elements of the brand.

Hezbollah's Political Brand

The original Hezbollah logo first appeared with the party's emergence on the political scene in the 1980s. The brand was fashioned in an angular Kufi font,² alluding to the fonts of the Abbasid Caliphate, an era when the cultural and political center of the Islamic Umma lay in present-day Iraq rather than in present-day Saudi Arabia (el-Deen, n.d.). The choice of font therefore shifts the geopolitical center of gravity of the Middle East eastward toward the party's Shiite ally and patron, Iran (Khatib, 2012). Beginning with the birth of the party in 1982, Hezbollah's *raison d'être* lies in its self-professed agenda of Islamic resistance against Israeli occupation (Lamloum, 2009). This vision is reflected most effectively in the party's political brand "Hezbollah," or "The Party of God."



Figure 1. The Hezbollah logo.

Hezbollah's political image relies on an amalgamation of attractive and menacing symbols to attract new audiences, reassure constituents, and alarm enemies (Khatib, 2012). This strategy can be ascertained from the visual elements of the logo, shown in Figure 1. Below the "Hezbollah" text at the center, the party defines itself as "the Islamic resistance in Lebanon," a statement that situates the party ideologically, geographically, and politically, binding religiosity and nationalism to grant Hezbollah a

² The Kufi font is the earliest Islamic font, dating back to the 8th to 10th centuries and developed in al-Kufa, an early Islamic cultural center. The font was one of the early calligraphy traditions used to publish the earliest version of the written Qur'an. For a brief description of the script, see the entry "Kufic script" in *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/324418/Kufic-script>.

sacrosanct legitimacy. The most poignant aspect of the logo is the extended fist emerging from the word *God* in the logo, raising the AK-47 rifle and the accompanying text from the horizontal plane. The rifle denotes Hezbollah's military capability and its source of power, and the accompanying motto, "For it is the Party of God that shall prevail," atop the rifle suggests, through the parallel orientation of the two elements, a conceptual link between military capability and the promise of deliverance and victory.

Besides the menacing symbols of the party, positive visual symbols reinforce its public image: Emerging from the center of the text is a blade of wheat, signifying the social services the party provides. The symbol also alludes to the party's history of providing agricultural advice to farmers in the Beqaa' valley (Jaber, 1997). From its inception, the organization's agenda equally emphasized the importance of religious and pragmatic assistance to maintaining a "resistance community" (H. Nasrallah, 2008). Finally, the logo features a globe, signifying Hezbollah's presence and geopolitical importance.



Figure 2. Hezbollah (left) and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (right).

In fact, Hezbollah's history is intricately tied to its global reach, as the party emerged from various efforts of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to export the Iranian Revolution globally (Jaber, 1997). Hezbollah's logo also points to the proximity of the party to its Iranian ally, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, whose logo is shown in Figure 2. The visual elements of the brand borrowed from the Hezbollah logo (rifle, wheat, globe, fist) have also been noted in partisan news coverage ("Iranian official hails," 2013) and academic research (Khatib, 2012).

Remixing the Political Brand

Here, the conceptual model of the medieval carnival is particularly relevant to the parodies of the Hezbollah logo. Bakhtin (1984) argues that carnival offers a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order" (p. 11). Thus, a carnival may act as a prism through which to view revolution because the two phenomena represent similar moments of suspension in the political and social systems that enable the emergence of alternate narratives. In revolution, as in carnival, societies experience a temporary social leveling of government and rebel forces, external and internal actors, state and nonstate actors, parties and the people. This social leveling allows for communication that creates "new forms of speech or [gives] new meaning to old forms" (p. 16). Such practices may also undermine the claim of any one party to the truth.

Moreover, Bakhtin argues that carnival is “the people’s second life, organized on the basis of laughter” (p. 8). Thus, laughter is a crucial element of the communication of carnival and critique, and laughter that is permissible during the carnival is not possible outside of it. A similar sentiment can be found in the commentary of the cartoonist Aiham VAN Syria, the creator of one parody examined in this article, who remarked that had he made a similar cartoon parody of Hezbollah’s logo before the revolution in 2011, “people would have spilled my blood, and my family would have been the first to do so” (personal communication, October 1, 2013). Since the revolution, he has created several parodies that have been distributed both online and offline. Thusly, the revolution opened opportunities for oppositional views to gain representation in the public sphere. Moreover, after decades of government control of television, print media, radio, and even the websites available inside Syria (Baiazy, 2012; Pies & Madanat, 2011; Rugh, 2004), the revolution saw the creation of opposition television stations broadcasting from neighboring countries and oppositional news websites and social media pages (Khamis, Gold, & Vaughn, 2012). This analysis reveals several parallels between the concept of carnival and the conditions of revolution in this case study. Just as Bakhtin theorized, laughter during revolution assumes a liberating dimension, enabling victory over fear and subjective empowerment through the reappropriation and ridicule of all symbols of power and authority. All in all, the convergence of the literature can provide a window through which to view the parodies as revelatory of the dynamic of cultural production during social movements, in Syria and across the globe. As I apply Bakhtin’s model to the parodies at hand, the questions that emerge are: To what extent do these spoofs become emblematic of carnivalesque humor that turns authority on its head? Moreover, to what extent can the context of the revolution mimic the medieval politics of Rabelais’s carnival, and finally, what are the consequences of these dynamics to our understanding of what constitutes success in a social movement?

Uncrowning

According to Bakhtin (1984), carnival enables an “uncrowning” or unseating of political authority through regenerative reversal of its sources of legitimacy. Parody here represents a communicative technique of duplication that both accompanies and goes beyond and against a discourse. It places language beside itself, exposing its presuppositions and contradictions (Hariman, 2008). As such, each of the logo’s reproductions exhibits a close adherence to the original text. However, these parodies are unique in their capacity to blur distinctions between actors and spectators, a characteristic that is equally symptomatic of Bakhtin’s carnival and revolution. Thus, as these parodies were created by rebel fighters, Syrian opposition groups, and even cartoonists in the region and internationally, they included initiators and late adopters, creators, and onlookers in a process of imitation and derision that fractured the Hezbollah image both because of the military action the party was undertaking and because of the distribution of these parodies.

Throughout this process, the parodies call into question the tenets that support Hezbollah’s agenda, chief among which is its religious legitimacy. A notable example of this process can be seen in the rebranding of the “Party of God” as *Hezbollah*, the “Party of pre-Islamic deity *Al-Lāt*” (Arabian deity), and *Hezb al-Shaytan*, “Satan’s Party” (Abuzaid, 2013) in Figure 3. In the former, a simple play on words transforms the party from the “Party of God” to the “Party of the pre-Islamic deity *Al-Lāt*”; in the latter the juxtaposition of God and Satan shatters the organization’s Islamic image.



Figure 3. From God's party to Satan's party.

Moreover, the visual elements parallel the this reversal of Hezbollah's source of religious legitimacy by reversing the directionality of Hezbollah's rifle inward, toward itself and its home country, Lebanon, symbolized by the burning cedar tree in the center. This example symbolizes what Rancière (2013) characterizes as a metaphorical image that "displace[s] the representations of imagery" (p. 27), for the rifle that previously signified a menacing threat for enemies has become a source of weakness directed toward the party's homeland. The result is a carnivalesque art form that depicts a world à l'envers, where reality and fiction collide and where mimicry turns official narratives on their heads (Bakhtin, 1984).



Figure 4. Bashar's thugs.

In another parody, shown in Figure 4, the undermining of the party's religious legitimacy is taken further as the name "Hezbollah," the "Party of God," is erased. Here, the divine legitimacy of the party is replaced by "Bashar's *Shabbiha*." The label reduces the party's authority from one derived from God to one derived from President Bashar al-Assad. Moreover, the cartoonist, Hajjaj, brands the organization as "*Shabbiha*," a term for extramilitary thugs loyal to Bashar al-Assad, reducing the institutional framework that encompasses civic, military, and political activities into a mere grouping of paramilitary criminals. In parallel to the textual uncrowning performed by the spoof, the visual alteration of the brand achieves a third level of political uncrowning that magnifies the effect of the text. Finally, the rifle in this re-creation is grasped by the letter A in the name Bashar, suggesting the relinquishing of the party's military capabilities to the control of Bashar al-Assad, and undermining yet again the party's military might and menacing presence in the region. Another parody, published by caricaturist Jihad Ortani (2013) that appeared in *Al Watan* newspaper and *Veto* online on September 18, 2013, provides a similar subservient disarming theme. In this parody, shown in Figure 5, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, grasps Hezbollah's rifle and moves it.



Figure 5. Iran's right hand.

In both Figure 4 and Figure 5, the disappearance of the complimentary elements of the Hezbollah image deprives the party of control over the format and context of its public image. For example, the disappearance of the symbolic shaft of wheat from both the *Shabbiha* and the Khamenei logos dispels the social outreach image cultivated by the party. Equally, the disappearance of the globe foregrounding the logo reduce the party's geopolitical importance to mere subservience to its regional allies: Iran and Bashar al-Assad. These images also evoke notions of proxy parties established to further the aim of larger players. Finally, Hezbollah's motto, "Islamic resistance in Lebanon," is equally absent, amounting to an accusation of the un-Islamic aspects of the party's involvement in the Syrian conflict against a predominantly Muslim Syrian population. All in all, these spoofs achieve what Bakhtin (1984) terms an "uncrowning," or delegitimation, of Hezbollah as a political actor by undermining of the party's independence and self-government, and its military power and threatening presence.

The Language of the Marketplace

In their scathing criticism, the parodies do not embody a deliberative, civil form of political contestation and argumentation (Hariman, 2008). Instead, they are most similar to the grotesque, profane humor symptomatic of Rabelais's carnival. As a result, such carnivalesque humor achieves a leveling of social hierarchies whereby the language of the marketplace enables the treatment of the "exalted and the lowly . . . within the same dance" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 160). Moreover, the duplication elicits laughter through the "cognitive gap" between the political brand and the political reality, which in turn adds comic relief to the political criticism, unsettling the narrative Hezbollah has constructed about itself (Bal, Berthon, Pitt, & DesAutels, 2009, p. 232). As the logo parodies contrast Hezbollah's logo and its recreation, they also contrast Hezbollah's conceptual public agenda and its application during the Syrian conflict. Comic theory's understanding of cognitive gaps provides a compelling dimension to logo modifications. However, the conception of cognitive gaps fails to capture the liberating, democratizing value of laughter that Bakhtin elucidates as a mechanism to introduce unofficial truth. Further, Bakhtin's notion of grotesque realism is perfectly suited to the understanding of parody's ability to highlight incongruence, for the definition of *grotesque* (Merriam-Webster.com) denotes the representation of the absurd and incongruent. Thus, the parodies are humorous not only because of their profanity but also because they are "popular." The "popular" conceptions of these parodies can be confirmed through the Arabic colloquial language employed emphasizing its "belonging to the people" and their language.

Further, the parodies allow the "bringing down to earth" of the sacred through crude bodily mockery (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 20). In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin argues that the

unofficial speech of medieval clerics as well as the speech of the simple folk was deeply infused with images of the lower stratum—with obscenities and curses, profanities and swearing . . . everything that was absorbed by that speech was to submit to the degrading power of the mighty lower stratum. (p. 87).

To Bakhtin, the culture of folk humor was defined by its adherence to grotesque realism. A common theme within these spoofs is manifested in the use of grotesque imagery, language, and text. The grotesque parody of Hezbollah strips the party of its ideological godlike image, reducing it to that of the erroneous, frequently degenerate, and repulsive human body. The most poignant example of the grotesque trend of the parody humor can be seen in the *Akalna Khara*, or "We ate shit," parody that first appeared in May 2013 attached to leaked radio recordings of Hezbollah fighters in al-Qusayr calling for help ("Hezbollah flag/video," 2013). The meme was then redistributed by the online publication of the Lebanese Freedom Foundation, an organization dedicated to late Druze president Bashir Gemayel. The cartoon, shown in Figure 6, depicts the Hezbollah logo using an identical font, color, and format to spell out the words, "We just ate shit," in reference to the al-Qusayr fighting.



Figure 6. *We ate shit (Akalna Khara).*

The crude conceptual metaphor drawn by the text is cemented through the visual image of the fly-infested fecal matter that accompanies it, reversing the sentence-image associated with Hezbollah's brand. Here, the scatological humor of the image serves as a metonymy between eating feces and incurring losses, heightening the crude carnivalesque nature of the parody. The feces link the official rhetoric of the party with the "degrading and renewing power of the mighty lower stratum" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 87). To Rabelais, the belly is the core of human existence, source of degradation and renewal, of gluttony and excess, but also of maternity and paternity. The image of feces, however, points to the degenerate nature of the belly, to the multiple levels of degradation manifested through the ingestion of the products of defecation. The cycle of degradation is anchored in grotesque imagery suggesting a spiraling process of degradation. In addition, the image replaces Hezbollah's claim to power through its military capabilities, the rifle, with a spoon, an instrument of Hezbollah's degradation: its "eating shit." The replacement implicitly couples the absent image of the rifle with the spoon, arguing that Hezbollah's military capabilities provided the instrument of its degradation. More significantly, the image of Hezbollah's secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, carrying the spoon concretely visualizes of the concept of the colloquial expression and restores the significance of the expression *eating shit* from mundane colloquialism to the graphic metaphor it signifies. Flies compound this effect, shown zipping upward and outward, denoting a spreading of the party's decomposition and moral degradation. Finally, an elusive half-bust of Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah is attached to the word "eating," and particularly the extended letter *a*, which transforms into the arm holding the spoon. The image depicts Nasrallah propping up the spoon (the ultimate active form of degradation) while looking away from the process, and the visual image suggests his lack of active participation in the process, endorsement of the downfall of the party, and most importantly, his responsibility for the process.

Yet, carnivalesque humor does not reference the grotesque merely to undermine the authority of a single political actor, whether Hezbollah or its leader. Instead, the profane and grotesque are not only destructive to existing power but are also generative of new discourses. They are thus sources of both life and death (Bakhtin, 1984). In the same fashion that each of these spoofs couples an official and an unofficial narrative, they also couple a narrative of degradation with a narrative of renewal customary to

medieval humor. More concretely, the parodies studied in this article dispel or announce the death of uncontested public images by introducing multiple narratives. The references to the grotesque and profane serve to debase the authoritative subject parodied. Most importantly, however, the logos demonstrate a medieval devotion to the binary of death and birth, for as Bakhtin noted, the language of excrement is closely tied to fertility and rebirth. Bakhtin highlights the importance of dialogism in parodical replication of discourse.

Returning to the notion of semiotic binaries created by these parodies, I believe that the dialogism employed by the spoofs enables a coupling of official and oppositional discourse. This coupling can be seen in the republication of the “resistance” spoof alongside several articles that provide political commentary of Hezbollah’s involvement in the Syrian crisis. The significance of these republications stems from precisely the metonymical function these spoofs come to represent, wherein their simplistic visual images reduce the problematic nature of Hezbollah’s strategic decisions to visual metaphors. In doing so, and in their reproduction alongside analyses of Hezbollah’s agenda in the news, these cartoons provide a visual trope that is consequently reproduced in a testament to its persistence. The metonymical function of the spoofs in representing the conflict can be evidenced by not only their reproduction in cartoons and blogs but also their reproduction alongside analyses of the political environment of al-Qusayr.

The dialogism of official and oppositional narratives is also exemplified by “Hezbollah’s Two Guns,” a cartoon by Jihad Ortani published in *Al Watan Online* (2013; Figure 7). Here, the Hezbollah logo sports a wooden gun pointed toward Hezbollah’s official enemy and a live gun pointed toward neighboring Syria. The significance of live guns in “Hezbollah’s Two Guns” is to highlight the incongruence of Hezbollah’s military action against an ally, despite Hezbollah’s official rhetoric.



Figure 7. “Hezbollah’s Two Guns.”

“Hezbollah’s Two Guns” also shows Hezbollah fighting on two fronts: Israel and Syria. The opposite directions of the two arms combined with the divergent directions of the flag-covered arrows show a party about to be ripped apart to head in two directions. Meanwhile, the parody contrasts the official and the oppositional, the real and the theoretical agendas of the party. In the cartoon, Hezbollah’s live rifle fires at Syria, while a dummy rifle points toward Hezbollah’s official enemy, Israel. The parody

achieves a destruction of the party, its agenda, its narrative, and its opponents, while signaling the possibility offered by this destruction to be a form of birth and renewal.

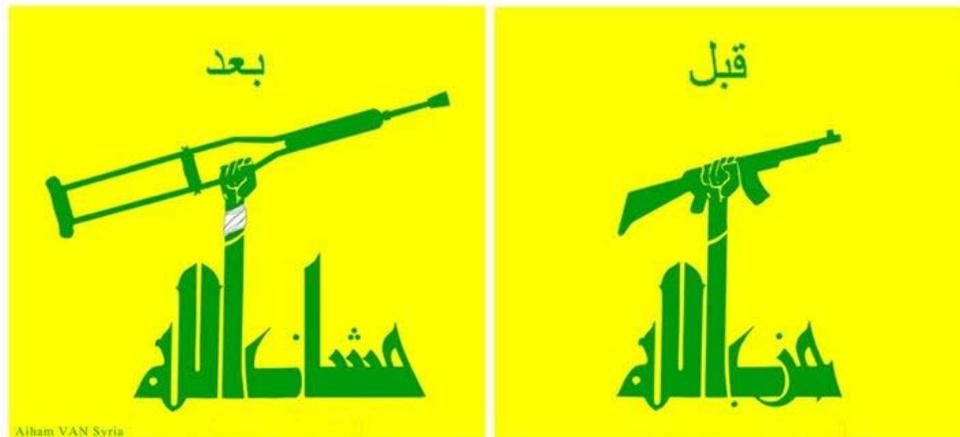


Figure 8. "For God's Sake" by Aiham VAN Syria.

Themes of rupture and renewal can also be seen in another parody by Syrian opposition cartoonist Aiham VAN Syria (Figure 8). In Aiham's parody, the word "Hezbollah" disappears from the text and is replaced by "For God's sake." In parallel, the strong arm carrying the weapon is replaced with a bandaged arm carrying a crutch, denoting not only Hezbollah's casualties and wounded but also the ideological weakness of the party. Seen through Bakhtin's lens, the parody offers a visual metonymy of rupture and death, the waning of established official truths and the emergence of renewed horizons of discourse. The parodies contrast logos with counterlogos, official texts with their subversive counterparts, which become inextricably bound. The parodies also document the emergence of new realities, as the rupture forecast of Ortani's parody came alive in September 2013, when a delegation made up of the families of fallen or injured Hezbollah fighters reportedly called an end to the Syrian intervention because of the cost paid in human life (Hashem, 2013). Finally, the orientation of the frames strengthens the content. As Arabic reads from right to left, the transformation of the right frame "Hezbollah" into the left "For God's sake" parody presents a visual narrative of the unraveling of the political party alongside the unraveling of its image.

Conclusion

In *Weapons of the Weak*, James Scott (1985) lamented the imbalance of attention accorded to large-scale revolutions vis-à-vis everyday acts of resistance and dissent. In addition, even in the cases of large-scale revolutions, there is an imbalance in the perception of the legitimacy and success of a revolution, measured through the effectiveness with which political authority has been unseated. This is evident in the case of the Syrian Revolution, whose mention in media and academic discourse has descended into discussions of civil war rather than revolt.

Yet, the visual and textual analysis of these parodies presents a twofold argument for daily acts of resistance. First, it suggests that the notion of political authority as it applies to the study of social movements should be reconsidered as one that is not purely represented in the binary of maintaining or dissolving absolute political control. Rather, authority is manifested in multiple areas, including the degree of control over an actor's political image and the degree of control over the forms of discourse represented in the public sphere. Moreover, authority derives its legitimacy from various religious, moral, cultural, ethnic, and other discourses. As such, the contestation of authority through the introduction of counterdiscourses and the undermining of sources of legitimacy can be seen as successful forms of contestation, even as these contestations do not culminate in the reorganization of the political system. Furthermore, societies writ large do not exist in binary states of revolution or political stability; rather, sophisticated political systems consist of daily forms of opposition and critical discourse that require breaking the fear in addressing authority. Through the visual analysis of these parodies, this article has shown that "failed" revolutions may yet reveal broader and widely overlooked opportunities for the public to break the fear and to introduce opportunities for continuous everyday resistance.

Such everyday forms of resistance, which Asef Bayat (2013) characterized as "nonmovements," or daily forms of fragmented and individual resistance, were precursors to the Arab Spring. Bayat's vision of Arab social movements suggests that everyday forms of resistance such as these parodies cultivate a culture of subversive practices that may foment into revolution yet again. Thus, these parodies ridicule and deride, undermining political authority in ways that may not unseat it in the present but certainly suggest an unsettling of the stability with which oppression and dictatorship is practiced. This accomplishment may remain overlooked in part because of its fragmented character, which does not conform to a normative vision of discourse in the public sphere in democratic contexts or to visions of revolution as social movements. Indeed, the profane linguistic and visual presentation of these logos allows an unveiling of an unofficial truth that is closer to public perception because of both its crudeness and its popular perceived audience. The parodies speak the vernacular of the street and the crude language of the marketplace, further enhancing their reach.

Most importantly, the power of such parody stems from the duality it creates, because it uses the very same images and language of the party to critique it, introducing counterdiscourse to the original narratives of the political actor. Thus, it becomes impossible, for example, to hear Hezbollah's name mentioned without the cognitive association of "Hezbollah" with "Hezbollahat," or the association of the "Party of God" with the "Party of the Devil." Through this duality, the parodies become binaries, which represent both the party's official discourse (logo) and oppositional perspectives. More importantly, the dualities created by these texts rupture existing sentence-image binaries in favor of a new multiplicity of perspectives into the *doxa* of the political realm, contributing the liberating power of emerging from single narratives, or even the opposition of a narrative and its counterpart. Instead, we are witnesses to both a narrative and its infinite counterparts, corresponding to the numerous individuals whose personal contributions and sacrifices to revolution are reflected in the expanded discourse.

My argument aspires not to direct this form of criticism to one actor but to acknowledge the capacity of parody to enrich political discourse during revolution by coupling narratives with their intellectual opposites. Similar to the revolutionary environment that surrounded Rabelais and Bakhtin's

work, these spoofs are the product of revolutionary times that foster a form of humor that is universal, creative, and liberating. It is important to foster this form of humor not only to prevent future configurations of power that exclude alternate narratives from public discourse but also to introduce new ways to define revolution, including when revolutions begin and end.

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